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Claims:

1. Viral interleukin-6 (v-IL-6), which can be obtained by recombinant expression of the DNA of HHV-8.
2. A polypeptide, which can be obtained by recombinant expression of the DNA of HHV-8, and which comprises the amino acid sequence displayed in fig. 2.
3. A polypeptide having the amino acid sequence displayed in fig. 2.
4. A fragment of v-IL-6, having the capability of binding to an IL-6 receptor and comprising the amino acid sequence GFNEtsCLkKLadGFFEFE.
5. A fragment as claimed in claim 4, which essentially comprises the amino acid sequence GFNEtsCLkKLadGFFEFE.
6. A fragment as claimed in claim 4 or 5, which binds to a human IL-6 receptor.
7. Mutants and variants of v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 1, or of the polypeptide as claimed in claim 2, which mutants and variants are obtained by conventional amino acid substitutions or deletions, with the proviso that these mutants and variants are functionally equivalent to v-IL-6.
8. Fragments of the v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 1, or the polypeptide as claimed in claim 2 or 3, characterized in that they are able to competitively inhibit the biological activity of IL-6 in a suitable assay system.
9. An isolated nucleic acid coding for v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 1.
10. An isolated nucleic acid coding for the polypeptide as claimed in claim 2.

11. An isolated nucleic acid having the nucleotide sequence displayed in fig. 2.
12. An isolated nucleic acid, hybridizing under stringent conditions to the nucleic acid as claimed in one or more of the claims 9 to 11, encoding functional v-IL-6.
13. Monoclonal or polyclonal antibodies directed against v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 1, or the polypeptide as claimed in claim 2 and/or 3.
14. Testkit for the detection of v-IL-6 in a sample, comprising an antibody as claimed in claim 16.
15. Testkit for the detection of antibodies against v-IL-6, comprising v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 1 and/or the polypeptide as claimed in claim 2 or 3 or both, claims 2 and 3, and/or mutants and variants of v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 7, and/or fragments of v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 4-6 or 8.
16. Testkit for the detection of v-IL-6 DNA or RNA, comprising a nucleic acid as claimed in one or more of the claims 9 to 12.
17. A medicament comprising as an active ingredient the antibody as claimed in claim 13.
18. A medicament comprising as an active ingredient v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 1 and/or the polypeptide as claimed in claim 2 or 3, and/or mutants and variants of v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 7, and/or fragments of v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 4-6 or 8.
19. A medicament comprising as an active ingredient the nucleic acid as claimed in one or more of claims 9 to 12.
20. A cell culture growth medium, comprising as an additional active ingredient v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 1, or the polypeptide as claimed in claim 2 or 3, or mutants and variants as claimed in claim 7, or fragments as claimed in claim 8, or mixtures of these substances.

21. A process of manufacturing v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 1, or the polypeptide as claimed in claim 2 or 3, or mutants and variants as claimed in claim 7, or fragments as claimed in claim 4-6 or 8.
22. A process of manufacturing a medicament, wherein v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 1, or the polypeptide as claimed in claim 2 or 3, or mutants and variants as claimed in claim 7, or fragments as claimed in claim 8 are combined with suitable excipients and/or other auxiliary compounds.
23. A process of manufacturing a medicament comprising as an active ingredient monoclonal or polyclonal antibodies directed against v-IL-6, or a polypeptide comprising v-IL-6, or mutants, variants or fragments of v-IL-6, or a nucleic acid encoding v-IL-6 for the treatment of kaposi sarcoma, Castleman's disease, multiple myeloma, kidney cell carcinoma, mesangial proliferative glomerulonephritis or B cell lymphoma.
24. A process of diagnosing an HHV-8 infection comprising the in vitro detection of v-IL-6 antigen, v-IL-6 DNA, v-IL-6 RNA or antibodies against v-IL-6.
25. A process of diagnosing the HHV-8 associated disorders kaposi sarcoma, Castleman's disease or body cavity based lymphomas (BCBL) through the diagnosis of an HHV-8 infection as claimed in claim 24.
26. A process of growing cells in culture, characterized in that v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 1, or the polypeptide as claimed in claim 2 or 3, or mutants and variants as claimed in claim 7, or fragments as claimed in claim 4-6 or 8, or mixtures of these compounds are contained in the growth medium.
27. The process as claimed in claim 26, wherein the cells are B-lymphocytes, hybridomas, hemopoietic cells or endothelial cells.